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Four Plays of Menander: The Hero, Epitrepontes, Periceiomene, and Samia. Edited, with Introductions, Explanatory Notes, Critical Appendix, and Bibliography, by EDWARD CAPPS, Professor of Classics in Princeton University. 8vo, cloth, pp. x+329. Ginn & Co. \$2.50.

Anyone ignorant of the fate of New Comedy in Greek might on receipt of this book find himself in the frame of mind of the gentleman who began action against the express company to recover for the lost arms of the Venus of Melos. Of the *Hero*, there are left only 80 lines, of the *Samia* 485, and of the *Epitrepontes* and the *Periceiomene* 920 and 907 respectively.

The average student of ancient literature, however, who has heretofore known Menander only through Plautus and Terence and the comparatively few passages which are really serviceable from among the eleven hundred Greek fragments, will be surprised and delighted to find at last within reach an actual and considerable first-hand acquaintance with the foremost writer of New Comedy. Availing himself of the Cairo papyrus discovered by Lefebvre in 1905 and published in 1907, and of the critical literature which has since appeared, Professor Capps has produced one of the most original and scholarly editions in the College Series, and one of the most valuable in content. His introductions to the individual plays bring the student well prepared to the beginning of the mutilated remains; his device for indicating restored parts of the text, a great many of them meritorious contributions of his own, is so neat and unobtrusive that neither the eye nor the thought is subject to the least interruption or annoyance; the method of indicating the probable content of missing passages is also so effective that at the ends of at least the two best preserved of the plays the reader has the impression of having finished a complete work; the notes, well distributed in the fields of syntax, metric, literary parallel, and interpretation, are concise and compact, and yet full; the critical appendix and bibliography are suited to the needs of advanced scholarship. If there is anything to be regretted, it is that the edition has not devoted a little of the space which its author has used to such advantage for the illumination of other phases of learning, to the poet's language and style, and to the significance of his plays in the universal history of comedy. Drama is so distinct and so stimulating a form of literature that the reader of one of its masters never feels satisfied until he has been shown the relation of the part to the whole. An essay of no very great length establishing a connection on the one hand between New and Roman and Old Comedy, and on the other between ancient and modern comedy, would have enhanced the attractive qualities of an edition already little short of perfection.

But let us not forget that the book is really by Menander, and that it would be ungracious to withhold from him his share of credit for its appearance. In these 2,400 lines we are at last able to envisage the "shining star"

who gave New Comedy a large part of its name. It is possible now to appreciate for ourselves the facility of language and the ease of action for which he was praised, the slenderness and yet the effectiveness of his plots, his skill in the portrayal of the life of the men and women among whom he moved—the vivacity of the Athenian character, the broad humor of the slave, the ludicrous aspect and language of the peasant, the impetuosity of youth in love, the calculating coolness of the father, and the affection and self-sacrifice of the mother, the pathetic lot of the hetaira, whose virtues the poet brings to the foreground, and to whose faults he inclines to be charitable. Menander is thoroughly sympathetic in his depiction of life. It all seems very natural and human and gentle. There is enough here, too, to let us see that Caesar's famous coinage—*O dimidiata Menander*—rings true; there is a real and pronounced affinity between Menander and Terence; the same unruffled calm of speech and sunny equipoise of temper that captivated even the Christian enemies of Terence in the days of the early church belong to Menander also—

Quidquid come loquens atque omnia dulcia dicens,

in Cicero's phrase. Of the *vis comica* of the Greek, too, whose lack in Terence the Dictator noticed and regretted, we seem to penetrate the secret. The simplicity of Menander's plot, his familiarity with the life he portrayed, the naturalness and directness of his characterization and action, and the absence of everything that did not belong to actual human existence—"O Menander! O Life! Which of you copied the other?"—all this would very naturally lend to vigor of representation, especially in the plays of a man who had lived longer and seen more of the world than his Latin imitator, whose portrayal was at second hand.

The appearance of Professor Capps's admirable edition will no doubt result in the giving of Menander courses in many colleges. Those teachers who do not read it because they must teach it—or because they must review it—should read it for the delight it will give them.

GRANT SHOWERMAN

Cicero's Letters. Selected and edited by ERNST RIESS. New York: Macmillan, 1910. Pp. lix+396. \$0.60.

This collection, which is intended for the use of college Freshmen, contains one hundred and forty-six letters, well selected with reference to their general interest. The preface promises "conscientious acknowledgment" of the assistance of predecessors, yet, by some curious oversight, we are nowhere told whose text the editor has elected to follow or what deviations he may have made from it, and the scanty references which are made to other works are too advanced for the average student and too few for the teacher.

The introduction discusses the history of letter-writing; Cicero's letters